

Stories of the Ohio River and the Underground Railroad

Bob Ford will lead your students through an hour long program featuring the stories and songs of the Underground Railroad. He will link the national story with the local story of Greene County and Xenia, Ohio, his home town. Bob's program is presented as an abolitionist meeting lead by Rial Cheadle (pronounced Rile Chee' dul), a known minstrel abolitionist along the Ohio River. Leading abolitionists in Xenia, Ohio, were Rev. Wilson, a presbyterian minister, and David Monroe, a carriage and cabinet maker. Rev. Wilson organized the first abolitionist meeting in Xenia. Monroe was known to hide slaves on his property and transport them under loads of furniture. Once, when he was told late at night that a load of furniture was being delivered he asked, "Can it Walk?" meaning, "is it a load of escaping slaves?" Mixing local information with national events affecting everyone in America in 1859, Bob's program examines the question of slavery, the question of civil disobedience and ethical choices individuals may face in their daily lives.

CLASSROOM PREPARATION

Teachers will receive a copy of the study guide. It includes biographical materials about key national figures involved with the Underground Railroad. It also provides arguments used by these historic figures concerning the question of whether abolitionists should take a peaceful or forceful approach to the question, "How should we put an end to slavery?"

Key terms the teacher will want to discuss with the class before the presentation are

1. Abolitionist -- a person opposed to slavery, they wanted to "abolish" slavery.
2. Quakers -- members of a religious group who do not believe in war or using violence to solve problems. Many conductors on the Underground Railroad were Quakers.
3. Slaves -- individuals who are owned and controlled by others. The key word is "owned" as someone might own a car or a dog.

Individual student readers will be a part of the performance. You should receive copies of readers parts They are: 1)) **Message** -- the Message from Rev. Wilson 2) **Secretary** -- reads the minutes of the last meeting 3) **Person who raised money** -- reads report on Levi Coffin Fund 4) **Librarian** -- report on Uncle Tom's Cabin and 5) **John Brown's Letter**. Teachers should choose one reader for each of the letters. It does not matter whether the readers are male or female except it can be fun if the librarian is a girl.

The Messenger should report to Bob right after the singing of "Follow the Drinking Gourd." Bob will introduce all of the other readers and tell them when to come to the front.

The important point of discussion at this abolitionist meeting is whether the community should provide money for guns and support those who advocate the use of violence to free the slaves or should the money collected be used peacefully to clothe, feed, and transport those slaves who have been able to escape and reach the underground railroad. Teachers will want to use the ideas presented from the bio sheet to discuss these ideas with the students before the performance so they might choose sides and argue "for" or "against" supporting violence during the debate.

First photocopy if performing multiple shows, then cut along lines to separate parts. Choose five good readers to be part of each program.

MESSAGE

Brother Cheadle. Rev. Wilson sends his regrets. His wagon broke down and he needs to find some shelter for his "flock" tonight, so he will not be able to come to the meeting. He also wants me to tell you that he has "two rams and three ewes" that he would like to send to market. If you could take them for him, he will meet you in the morning.....

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SECRETARY REPORT

The last meeting took place at David Monroe's house. Called to order by Rev. Wilson. Letters were read from Frederick Douglas and William Garrison. William Collins reported on a speech by Sojourner Truth. Money will be collected to be sent to Levi Coffin for the benefit of slave orphans and mothers who need clothes and food. A letter was received from John Brown, requesting money to purchase guns to help slaves fight for their freedom. Debate had begun when the crowd outside the house grew violent. The meeting was adjourned so all could travel home safely.

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PERSON WHO RAISED MONEY

Our friends have been very generous. We have been able to raise \$142.68. We have also sent several boxes of shirts, dresses and blankets to help the orphans and mothers in need.

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LIBRARIAN

Yes. We currently have two copies of Mrs. Stowe's book, Uncle Tom's Cabin in the library. The ladies society is holding a reading circle every Thursday evening at six o'clock. Anyone who would like to hear the reading of the book may join us at the library.

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JOHN BROWN'S LETTER

"I am again out of Kansas, and am at this time concealing my whereabouts I have nearly perfected arrangements for carrying out an important measure in which the world has a deep interest..... Only the lack from five to eight hundred dollars to enable me do do so. I have written to some of our mutual friends in regard to it Cannot you either by direct or indirect action do something to further me? I want to bring the thing about during the next sixty days. Please write N. Hawkins Rochester, New York.... "

Signed John Brown.

REASONS AGAINST THE USE OF VIOLENCE

As some students may know the Civil War was fought because of the slavery issue, it may be easier for the majority to argue for the use of violence to solve the problem. Here are some real life occurrences which may give them reasons to consider the peaceful approach.

1. In Pennsylvania, a group of slaves were trying to escape from their master. Their owner discovered the house they were hiding in and surrounded it with armed men. During the fight some slaves were killed, the master was killed and many others were wounded. The slaves were finally captured and returned south.
2. At Cabin Creek, Indiana, two escaping slave girls were discovered in a cabin of one of their free relatives. The cabin was surrounded by an armed posse. While their aunt stood at the door and kept the posse out, other black friends and neighbors gathered around the cabin. The aunt would let some of their friends enter the cabin. During all the confusion, the girls were dressed like men and walked out of the cabin along with some of the neighbors. The posse was fooled. When they finally were able to search the house, the neighbors joked that the girls must have gone on the underground railroad.
3. At a trial of an escaping slave in Cincinnati, the slave and the court were waiting to hear the judges verdict. While they were waiting, the slave slowly slid back his chair. Someone put a hat on his head. He quietly got up and mingled in the crowd of friendly abolitionists. Before the sheriff or the judge knew it, he was out the door, on a carriage, and driving away to Canada and freedom. No shots were fired.
4. After a few violent raids, like those led by John Brown and John Fairfield, stories were written in a lot of newspapers telling about the raids. Many slave owners in Kentucky and the border states sold their slaves south to prevent them from being stolen or from running away. Because of the violence, many slaves did not have the opportunity to run away to freedom or they had a much longer and harder journey to try to escape from the deep south. Many abolitionists used this type of example as an excellent reason why violent methods hurt rather than helped the slaves.
5. The city of Wilberforce, Ohio was started as a town where southern plantation owners sent their slaves to be educated, trained and freed. Ohio was a free state, so at first, the owners sent their slaves there knowing they would become free. Other cities in southern Ohio also got their start this way. This changed after the Fugitive Slave Law of 1850.
6. Some southerners did not like slavery and freed their slaves in their wills when they died. Some abolitionists strongly believed that peaceful ways like this were the best way to defeat slavery.
6. Many of the abolitionists were religious people (like the Quakers) who believed in the teachings of the Bible. According to the Bible, it was all right to feed and help an escaping slave if he came to you and needed help. However, the Bible also said, "thou shalt not kill." They believed that killing for any reason was wrong.

Suggestions for Younger Audiences

The enclosed study guide for older students grade 4 and above is a good starting point for younger students. Ideas about music, rhythm and stories can be used, just adapted for younger imaginations.

Music

Lining songs was often done by the slaves. A leader would sing the first few words and the followers would "echo" what was sung. Example: Jacob's Ladder

Leader Follower Leader Follower Leader Follower Leader Follower
We are .. We areClimbing...Climbing.....Jacob'sJacob's.....LadderLadder
(Repeat three times)
Soldiers ...Soldiers of the of theCrossCross.....

Hambone

Leader	Follower
Hambone, hambone that's my name	Hambone, hambone that's my name
That's the name of this simple game	That's the name of this simple game.

Add simple rhythm -- Knees, clap, knees, clap, knees clap

Hambone, hambone where you been	Hambone, hambone where you been
(knees clap knees clap)	(knees clap knees clap)
Round the world and back again	Round the world and back again

Jubal

rhythm 2 claps, pause, one clap, pause (repeat)

For younger children a straight hand clap beat will work -- clap, pause, clap, pause, etc

Leader	Follower
Jubal	Jubal
Jubal this and Jubal that	Jubal this and Jubal that
Jubal killed a yellow cat	Jubal killed a yellow cat
Give me a double trouble Jubal	Give me a double trouble Jubal

Books

Reading from many of the young reader books about the Underground railroad will help. Three older books teachers could read from are:

To be a slave, by Julius Lester. This Newbery Honor book uses slaves own words.

His Promised Land, edited by Stuart Seely Sprague. Stories of John Parker.

Many thousand Gone, and The People Who Could Fly, by Virginia Hamilton.

Harriet Tubman they called her Moses.... Born a slave, Harriet led many slaves to freedom. She worked as a spy during the Civil War. She carried a gun with her and often used it to "encourage" escaping slaves who felt they were too tired to go on. She said, "dead niggers tell no tales, you go on or die. Even though she carried a gun, she used her head to outwit the slave catchers. Once when her own master came by her on the road, she started acting like a crazy woman chasing chickens so he would not recognize her. It worked.

Frederick Douglas was born a slave. He once "stole himself" and escaped to freedom. He later had to go to England to avoid recaptured under the Fugitive Slave Act of 1850. He finally "paid for himself" and became a free man. He was outspoken against slavery and became a famous speaker. He grew to believe slaves should fight for their freedom saying, "Brethren, arise, arise! Strike for your lives and liberties...." "Better even to die free, than to live slaves...." "who would be free must strike the blow!..." Douglas helped organize the first colored units in the Union army. Two of his sons fought during the Civil War.

Soujourner Truth was born a slave. She was originally named Isabella. She escaped and became a spokeswoman for slaves rights and for women's rights. She disagreed with Frederick Douglas. She looked for peaceable ways to end slavery. She had forgiven her masters believing they would be judged after they died for their actions on earth. She helped found the Freedman's Bureau which helped feed and train newly freed slaves.

John Brown was a famous abolitionist who lead an attack on the federal arms depot at Harper's Ferry. He planned to take the guns and give them to the slaves so they could fight their way to freedom. He was captured by Robert E. Lee (then part of the United States Army) and after a trial, was hanged. His attack and death increased the troubles between the North and the South. He said at his trial, "... it would be perfectly right in any one to interfere with you (the slaveholders) so far as to free those you wilfully and wickedly hold in bondage. I think I did right, ... I hold the Golden Rule, Do unto others as you would that others should do unto you, applies to all who would help others to gain their liberty."

John Fairfield was born in Virginia. His family owned slaves, but he worked to free them. He helped a slave he had grown up with, steal a horse and escape to Canada. He fought with slave owners and sometimes killed people as he helped slaves escape. He believed slavery was so terrible that any means could be used to defeat it. He disappeared in 1861 and was never seen again.

Levi Coffin was called the President of the Underground Railroad. Born in North Carolina, he saw first hand many terrible things done to the slaves. He moved to Indiana where he became an important conductor on the Underground Railroad. He later moved to Cincinnati, Ohio, and continued saving slaves escaping from Kentucky. He did not believe in violence. He would feed, clothe, and protect anyone who came to his door, but he often disagreed with his friend, John Fairchild, about using guns to free slaves.

Margaret Garner was a slave who escaped from Kentucky and was captured by slave hunters in Cincinnati Ohio. As the slave catchers were about to capture her again, she took a knife and killed her youngest daughter. She tried to kill the rest of her children to keep them from becoming slaves again, but the slave catchers stopped her. She was tried for murder, but the court decided a slave wasn't a person, therefore a slave could not commit murder. As she was taken on a boat to go back into slavery, she jumped overboard with her baby in her arms. They saved Margaret, but the baby drowned. Margaret Garner was willing to give up her life and the lives of her children rather than be a slave.

Laura S. Haviland was a Quaker in Michigan who believed in using peaceful means to free the slaves. She founded a school for escaping slaves and risked her life to help slaves escape to Canada.

William Garrison was a famous editor of an abolitionist paper called the Liberator. He believed strongly that the slaves should be freed and promised to do "everything in my power short of armed resistance to defeat slavery." In Boston, a mob tarred and feathered him for his beliefs. He helped Frederick Douglas become famous, then disagreed with him regarding the use of force to free the slaves.

AFRICAN AMERICANS TO REMEMBER

EARLY EXPLORERS

Estevanico (c.1500-1539) discovered Arizona. He was a slave with Spanish explorers in the New World. His party was destroyed by the Indians and disease. He escaped and was ordered to lead another party to discover the fabled Seven Cities of Cibola — the cities of gold. He was killed by Native Americans as he entered their city.

Black Spanish Settlers

The first European colony on U.S. soil was a Spanish colony established near the mouth of the Pee Wee River in South Carolina in 1526. Led by de Ayllon, the colony failed, and the Spanish returned to Spain, leaving many slaves behind. The slaves were blamed for the failure as many had run off to join the Indians. The colony was called San Miguel de Gualdape.

REVOLUTION

Benjamin Banneker

(1731-1806) Born in Maryland and educated by the Quakers, Banneker was a scientist & engineer. While still a youth, he made a wooden clock which ran the rest of his life. He published the first black almanac. He was part of the surveying team which laid out the city plan for Washington D.C.

REVOLUTION

James Armistead

was a spy for Lafayette. He was freed by the VA legislature in 1786. He changed his name to James Lafayette to honor his benefactor.

James Derham was born a slave in 1762. Sold to Dr. Kearsley, Jr., he was taught to read as he apprenticed in prescribing medicines. Sold to a British doctor, he learned more treating wounded soldiers. He purchased his freedom and established his own medical practice in New Orleans.

Crispus Attucks

(c.1723-1770) was a fugitive slave who died in the Boston Massacre. He was working as a seaman when Samuel Adams asked dock hands to demonstrate against the British. Crispus was one of the first men to die for freedom.

James Robinson

(1753-1868) was given a gold medal by Lafayette for his bravery at the Battle of Yorktown. He was refused his promised freedom after the war and sold back into slavery. He again volunteered for service in the War of 1812. He was returned to slavery.

FURTHER WEST

Jean Baptiste Du Sable

Pointe (1745-1818) was the founder of Chicago. He was the son of a Frenchman. His mother was a slave. He was educated in France and became a fur trader. He established a successful trading post at Chicago. He later moved to Missouri where he died.

Pompey

was with the Indians and British that attacked Boonesborough. He was an interpreter and a skilled marksman. During the battle, he climbed a tall tree and began shooting into the fort. Daniel Boone made an extremely long shot and killed Pompey in 1778.

York was born as a slave to the Clark family the same year William Clark was born. He traveled with the Lewis & Clark on their expedition to the Pacific Ocean. He became a skilled interpreter. His feats of strength and black skin color impressed many Indians and helped Lewis and Clark reach the Pacific Ocean.

Negro Abraham

was a fugitive slave who was adopted by the Seminoles. He became an interpreter and later a chief of the tribe. He led the Indian forces against the U.S. army. He moved west with the Seminoles—first to the Indian territories and then to Mexico. The Seminoles were later hired by the U.S. army to defend the Texas border.

Salem Poor fought at the Battle of Charlestown. He earned the praise of white officers and men who said, "Salem Poor ... behaved like an experienced officer as well as an excellent soldier, ... We would only beg leave to say, in the person of this said Negro centers a brave and gallant soldier. The reward due to so great and distinguished a character, we submit to the Congress." **Salem Poor** represents many like **Joseph Ranger, Seaman; Peter Salem, Bunker Hill soldier; Edward Hector, artillery;** and **Paul Cuffee, businessman;** who gave their lives and their fortunes for the American fight for freedom.